



REVIEWER QUALIFICATIONS AND NOTIFICATION OF INTEREST FORM

The Corporation for National and Community Service is currently seeking expert reviewers in the field of **Social Innovation** for the 2015 **Social Innovation Fund** (SIF) grant competition. This is an exciting opportunity to join one of a small number of review panels that will assess SIF applications against the criteria established in the SIF Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (Notice), and contribute to the selection of successful awardees.

BACKGROUND

The Social Innovation Fund is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Created by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009, the SIF awards grants to and works with existing grantmaking institutions, referred to as “intermediaries,” to direct resources to nonprofit organizations to validate and grow innovative, promising approaches to challenges facing local communities in three priority issue areas:

- **Youth Development** – Preparing America’s youth for success in school, active citizenship, productive work, and healthy and safe lives, including crime reduction initiatives focused on juvenile delinquency and victimization prevention and response.;
- **Economic Opportunity** – Increasing economic opportunities for economically disadvantaged individuals; and/or
- **Healthy Futures** – Promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing the risk factors that can lead to illness.

The SIF is one of the Obama Administration’s six “tiered-evidence initiatives” that embody a commitment to use rigorous evidence both to select recipients of federal funding and to validate the impact of their program models. It is also a key part of the Administration’s plan to embrace social innovation as a strategy to tackle critical social challenges. This approach rests on three key beliefs: (1) that the most compelling solutions to persistent problems in low-income communities are being developed in those communities and not Washington, DC; (2) that significant impact can be generated for society by proactively identifying the best of those community-based solutions, helping the organizations implementing them strengthen their evidence base, and supporting the growth of their impact; and (3) that the most productive role for the federal government in this process is that of catalyst to stimulate, focus and enhance public-private partnerships and collaborations to grow the impact of the best solutions.

To learn more about the Social Innovation Fund, please visit our website at: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/SIF>

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND REVIEWER ROLE

SIF expert reviewers will be assigned to panels and **assess approximately four to six applications from intermediary grantmaking organizations against the review criteria in the Notice**. The review criteria fall into three categories: Program, Organizational Capacity, and Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy.

Generally, reviewers will assess whether applicants:

- Make a persuasive case for the need related to the issue area(s) they will address in their identified target geographical area(s), provide a compelling theory of change related to their strategy for addressing the identified need, convey why the approach is innovative, introducing an evidence-based solution that is more effective than those currently in the marketplace and describe their own ability to successfully support the approach they propose;

- Propose clear and comprehensive plans with high likelihood of success for selecting quality subgrantees, managing and supporting evaluations of the impact of their subgrantees’ interventions, and growing the impact of funded program models to reach more individuals and communities;
- Provide information on their significant experience in making competitive grants, managing or supporting evaluations and using data in their decision-making, and growing the impact of previously funded program models;
- Describe strong capability of providing program and financial oversight, a commitment to sustaining SIF investment priorities, and a compelling strategy for supporting the sustainability of their subgrantees;
- Propose a reasonable and justifiable budget that will support the capacity necessary to achieve desired outputs and outcomes, and a persuasive description of their strategy for securing their own matching funds and supporting their subgrantees in securing additional matching funds.

Detailed questions to be answered by intermediary organizations in their application narratives are outlined in Section E of the Notice.

To read the full Notice for the 2015 Social Innovation Fund, please click on the link below:

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2015/social-innovation-fund-notice-funding>

QUALIFICATIONS

The Corporation is recruiting Program Reviewers and Evaluation Reviewers. In general, both types of reviewers should have the following:

- Strong written and oral communication skills;
- Strong time-management skills; and
- A demonstrated ability to collaborate.

Program Reviewers will be reviewing all of the content in the Program Design, Organizational Capacity, and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy sections of submitted applications. Program Reviewers should have expertise in social innovation, philanthropy, evidence-based solutions, scaling, collective impact, opportunity youth, healthy futures, economic opportunity and/or youth development and possess the following qualifications:

- Minimum of a college degree, graduate degree preferred or commensurate experience;
- 10+ years of relevant experience in the nonprofit and/or philanthropic sectors, including multiple years in a leadership role. Examples include:
 - ▶ Leadership positions at nonprofit organizations, foundations, social enterprises or corporate philanthropies, especially those that have histories of program replication;
 - ▶ Graduate work in a relevant subject, i.e. nonprofit management, business administration, public administration/policy, or relevant social science;
 - ▶ Academic positions in which reviewers have taught or published on the social sector;
 - ▶ Program Officer or management positions with grantmaking organizations, especially those that fund evidence-based programs serving low-income communities;
 - ▶ Authorship of articles or books or significant presentations on the subject of nonprofit management, philanthropy, and/or social entrepreneurship/innovation;
 - ▶ Management consulting experience with nonprofit or grantmaking organizations; and
 - ▶ Relevant board or committee membership.
- Some depth of knowledge about evaluation of social programs—reviewers do not need to be able to design a research study, but should be able to analyze research results, be familiar with a wide range of evaluation tools, and understand common evaluation challenges; and, preferably

- Issue expertise in economic opportunity, youth development, or healthy futures; general anti-poverty expertise would be an appropriate proxy.

Note: Practical, hands-on experience working closely with or within nonprofit organizations serving low-income communities is preferred.

Evaluation Reviewers will focus on key evidence and evaluation sections of the applications including: submitted evaluation proposals, descriptions of evaluation experience, and evaluation budget justifications. Because of the SIF's emphasis on promoting movement along the evidence of effectiveness continuum, it is imperative that reviewers be familiar with research designs that capture impact such as randomized control trials, quasi-experimental designs, and pre/post-test designs. Evaluation Reviewers should have the following qualifications:

- Minimum of a master's degree, Ph.D. preferred;
- 10+ years of relevant experience in nonprofit or public sector program evaluation. Examples include:
 - ▶ Significant graduate work in evaluation or related subject areas;
 - ▶ Project leadership or experience as primary investigator for program evaluations;
 - ▶ Academic positions in which reviewers have taught and/or published on program evaluation;
 - ▶ Authorship of articles or books or significant presentations on the subject of program evaluation or evidenced-based program investment and expansion; and
 - ▶ Serving as an evaluation consultant to nonprofit or grantmaking organizations; and
- Deep knowledge of social program evaluations including research design, implementation, analysis, and budgeting, and providing technical support as evidenced by evaluation studies conducted, reports authored, etc.

Note: Performance measure analysis alone is not sufficient evaluation experience. Reviewers should demonstrate experience with impact research designs such as randomized control trials, quasi-experimental designs, and/or pre/post-test designs.

Additional Qualifications for Program and Evaluation Reviewers:

The Corporation is also particularly seeking Program and Evaluation Reviewers who possess:

- Management expertise including ability to assess intermediary and subgrantee organizational capacity, human resources, performance measures and fiscal health; and
- Diverse geographic experience, especially including experience working in both urban and rural areas.

Experience participating in other federal application review processes is desirable, but not required.

Reviewers must have access to the Internet to participate.

SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND REVIEW

Early to Mid-April, 2015
(estimated 40 to 50 hour commitment)

Orientation sessions will be held for Review Participants 1 week prior to the start of the Review. You will receive updates with additional important dates and information once you are confirmed.

DETAILS ON THE REVIEW PROCESS

The FY2015 Social Innovation Fund Expert Review is utilizing a Field Review model, allowing reviewers to collaborate and complete their review responsibilities remotely, eliminating the need to travel to participate in this review. Reviewers will download, share, and print the review documents and applications using an online collaboration tool. A comfort level with basic Internet technologies and regular access to a high-speed internet connection are important.

Each reviewer will be assigned to a review panel and will read and assess his or her assigned applications individually, then participate in panel discussions regarding those applications. Each reviewer will be responsible for completing a high quality review form for each application read.

The review process duration is three weeks and can take 40 to 50 hours of work time to complete depending on individual and panel working styles. There are mandatory orientations, training sessions, and panel calls that will likely require alterations to your normal work and/or activity schedule. This can be an energizing and intense period in which tasks will come due regularly. During the review process, CNCS staff will be available to answer questions regarding the selection criteria or review process.

CNCS offers reviewers, with the exception of federal employees, a *modest honorarium* for their participation in a grant review. The honorarium amount varies but begins at \$1,000 depending on the participant's role and expected deliverables.

HOW TO RESPOND

If you are interested in participating in the review and are available to commit the required 40-50 hours during the period of the review, please provide the required information described in the Notification of Interest document on the SIF website and email it to SIFApplication@cns.gov by **February 27, 2015**. Please write “SIF Reviewer” in the Subject line.

If the information provided in your Notification of Interest indicates that you may be qualified to participate in the review, you will receive an email from CNCS asking you to submit an application for the review in CNCS' web-based grants management system, eGrants. Please note that submission of a Notification of Interest in this review does not confirm you for participation.

Before applying, potential expert reviewers should carefully assess whether they are likely to face any conflicts of interest with respect to the SIF competition. Reviewers with existing or substantial previous relationships to a current SIF applicant will not be allowed to serve as an expert reviewer. If potential reviewers answer “Yes” to any of the following questions, they may be disqualified from being a reviewer for this competition.

- Are you an employee or consultant for an organization seeking SIF funding?
- Are you preparing or planning to help prepare an application for SIF funding?
- Will your personal financial interests be affected by the outcome of the SIF grant competition?
- Have you held or are you holding any office, governing board membership, or similar body membership in an institution seeking SIF funding?

You will be required to provide information on potential conflicts of interest as part of your application to become a reviewer.